Senate battles for Nixon's tapes

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate pushed toward a final vote Thursday on a bill to assure the public and courts full access to Richard M. Nixon's White House tapes and papers.

By voice vote, senators adopted a resolution urging President Ford to do what he could to make public all the facts about the Watergate scandal, including any relevant documents from Nixon's 5½ years in office.

But the big battle was over the bill giving the federal government custo and control of the tapes and papers, measure designed to overturn an a rangement Nixon worked out with t Ford administration before he w pardoned last month.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Gaylo Nelson, D-Wis., was prompted by provision in the Nixon-Ford agreeme that would allow the former president destroy the papers after three years a the tapes after five years. In case Nixon's death the tapes would be d stroyed immediately.

"Destruction of these materials wou conceal forever the truth about t Watergate scandals," said Nelson. "O generation and future generations wou thus be unable to learn exactly wh happened and why."

Sen. Roman L. Hruska, RNeb., led t fight against the bill, calling unconstitutional on grounds it wou violate the concept of executive privile and infringe on Nixon's freedom speech and his right to privacy.

"If the president's papers can seized and disclosed to the world, th surely the private papers of a senator a congressman or perhaps a corp ration president, union leader or oth well-known person could be seized a disclosed to all potential litigants and the curious," Hruska said.

Sen. Robert Griffin, R-Mich attempted to require that the offici papers of all future presidents and members of Congress are publ property, but his amendment was kille 47 to 32.

"What did we have to do wi Watergate?" asked Sen. Russell Long, D-La., in arguing against t Griffin proposal.